

Thank you for the opportunity to address Senate Bills 971 and 972 about our state parks and the need for their protection.

My name is LuAnne Kozma. I live in Novi. I am here today representing Defense of Place, the nation's only organization devoted to assuring that parks are protected in perpetuity.

Defense of Place stands not only for threatened places, but also for the principle of law - the Public Trust Doctrine - that provides for their protection.

The senators who crafted these bills for our state parks were right: We desperately need more protection for parks and parkland from being sold.

The bills are a few steps in the right direction and might reduce the number of inappropriate parkland sales, but they will still lead to many sales that will greatly anger the public.

I support amending these bills to modify just two key points:

1. There is a need for a layer or two of citizen binding oversight so that it's absolutely certain that parkland **that citizens value** is not being sold. For these bills to be effective, we need to have reasonable public oversight of parkland sales, as well as the required legislative approval.

2. The public needs to be assured that all potential sales go through the same process.

I'd like to call your attention to the two loopholes that exempt some parkland from the process:

Exempting the sale of 100 acres or 15% of a park, whichever is less, from the process the bills are trying to create, is potentially very damaging for all of the state parks. For some parks, that amount would be crippling.

And, the loophole of allowing parkland outside of new, DNR-determined park boundaries to be called surplus, and sold, allows the sale and transfers of parkland like those at Bald Mountain, Brighton State and Proud Lake State Recreation Areas. These are the sales that have been the most contentious with the public. Why not subject these proposals to the same process?

It's in everyone's interest—the public's, elected officials', and the DNR park professionals' interests-- to prevent situations where the public believes that their parkland is being sold off and they have no say in the situation.

I think many people would agree the DNR needs some flexibility to sell off places that have never been used as parkland or ever construed of as parkland by the public.

If the bills' protections were offered to the large state park parcels determined by the DNR as surplus and if a binding citizen oversight process was used to test these proposed park sales, that would be a fair way of dealing with these parcels. Right now, decisions on parkland sales are solely up to the DNR director. The Natural Resources Commission is only advisory. The Citizens Committee on State Parks is advisory.

These bills set up a plan for future decisions on our beautiful state parks. Those decisions must be made with the very long term in mind--hundreds of years from now, generations from now--not just based on what today's needs are, or what today's park carrying capacity is.

Testimony provided by LuAnne Kozma, 238387 W. Leboast, Novi, MI 48375 to the Michigan state house subcommittee on "Conservation, Forestry and Outdoor Recreation" on April 27, 2006.

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